

National Elk Refuge News – July 12, 2006

Native Plant Walk



Pictured left to right below: Instructors Klara Varga and Jean Jorgensen.



The National Elk Refuge hosted a two-hour plant walk for the public last week, entitled “*Wild Plants: Their Histories and Uses.*” The walk was free of charge and limited to twelve participants who explored the hillside east of the historic Miller House on the Refuge Road.

The walk was led by Jean Jorgensen and Klara Varga, two instructors who share a love and knowledge of Jackson Hole native plants. Jean Jorgensen has led classes on native plants and their uses at the Teton Science Schools for the past nine years. In addition to her work at the Teton Science Schools, Jean was an owner and operator of a local herb store where she made tinctures, salves and teas. Klara Varga is the botanist for Grand Teton National Park, a position she has held for three years. Klara has been a botanist in the Jackson Hole area for the past thirteen years.



Together, the two instructors brought a variety of information and interesting stories to share with the class.

Though some participants were able to identify many of the plants seen, none were familiar with their traditional uses. “Learning the medicinal uses and folklore was wonderful,” said Jill Harkness, Recreation Supervisor for Teton County Parks and Recreation. “I can’t believe how quickly the time went. I wish the session could have lasted all day,” she added.

National Elk Refuge Outdoor Recreation Planner Lori Iverson organized the walk and was very pleased with the outing’s success. “We had a group with diverse backgrounds and interests, and they all took home new information,” she explained. “We were able to meet everyone’s needs, and they all left with a smile on their face.”



Jorgensen shared samples of dyes during a discussion of plant uses.



The discovery of a sego lily proved to be a crowd pleaser.